Appendix C.

 $Priority\ Species\ and\ Habitats\ Considered\ in\ the$   $CFLA\ Planning\ Process$ 

## **Priority Species and Habitats**

Priority species and habitats are the elements of rangeland ecosystems that we aim to conserve through the proposed CFLA. For this assessment, we have two types of priorities: communities and species. These conservation targets selected are summarized in the adjacent table. The following pages include more detailed information on each target as well as distribution maps.

All of these conservation targets are either Federal trust species or habitats that support numerous trust species, making them worthy of protection on their own. However, conserving habitat for these species also will protect habitat for numerous other species with similar habitat requirements.

We used a variety of sources to estimate the distribution of conservation targets within the study area. For breeding birds, we used two datasets provided by the California Avian Data Center (Ballard et al. 2012), predicted current habitat suitability and predicted future (2038 – 2070) habitat suitability based on regional climate model projections. Predicted wintering habitat suitability for the prairie falcon was modeled from eBird data (eBird 2012) using the Maxent modeling technique (Phillips et al. 2006; Phillips and Dudik 2008). Predicted habitat suitability for California condor and San Joaquin kit fox also were modeled with Maxent using a historic condor observation database (Cogan 1993) and California Natural Diversity Database occurrence data, respectively. To represent vernal pool distribution, we used a GIS dataset of vernal pool complexes (Holland 2009). Finally, unique botanical substrates (serpentinite and gabbro soils and Ione formations) were derived from a geological map of California (Luddington et al 2005) as well as data provided by the Bureau of Reclamation.

D: 4 G : /III.4	Status		
Priority Species/Habitat	PIF	Fed	CA
Habitats			
Vernal Pools			
Botanically Distinctive Substrates (Serpentine, Gabbro, and Ione)			
Species			
Nuttall's woodpecker (B)	MA	BMC	
oak titmouse (B)	MA	BCC/BMC	
loggerhead shrike (B)	MA	BCC/BMC	BSC
northern harrier (B)			BSC
prairie falcon (W/B)	MA	BMC	
burrowing owl (B)		BCC/BMC	BSC
Golden eagle		Р	
California condor	CR	E/BMC	
yellow-breasted chat (B)	MA		BSC
yellow warbler (B)		BCC/BMC	BSC
California thrasher (B)	MA		
Lawrence's goldfinch (B)	PR	BCC/BMC	
Tricolored blackbird	MA	BCC/BMC	
San Joaquin kit fox		Е	

PIF (Partners in Flight) Action Code: CR= Critical Recovery; IM=Immediate Management; MA= Management Attention; PR= Planning and Responsibility

 $\label{eq:Federal} \textbf{Fed (Federal )}: \ E=Endangered; \ T=Threatened; \ P=Protected \ Under \ Bald \ and \ Golden \ Eagle \ Protection \ Act; \ BCC=Bird \ of \ Conservation \ Concern; \ BMC=Birds \ of \ Management \ Concern$ 

CA (California): BSC= Bird Species of Special Concern

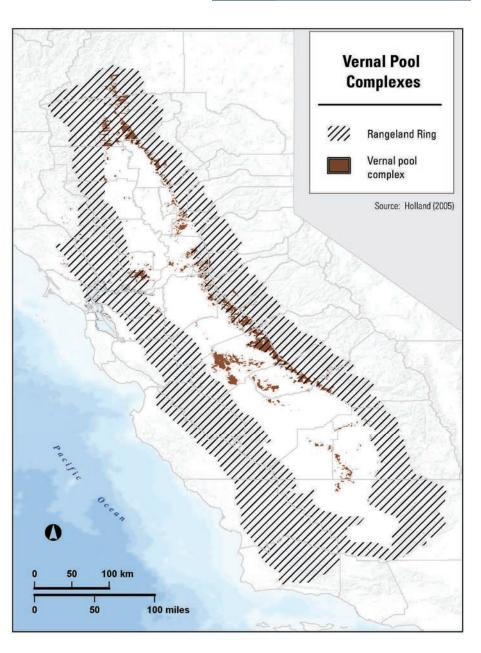
## **Vernal Pool Complexes**

Rangeland Habitat Association				
Grassland	Oak	Riparian/	Chaparral/	
	Woodland	Wetland	Scrub	

Vernal pools are ephemeral wetlands that support many specialized plants and animals including numerous endemic species. Normally, they occur in shallow depressions within grasslands that are underlain by an impervious layer of soil. Winter and spring rains fill vernal pools with water. When the rains stop, the pools slowly dry out through evaporation. Holland estimates that over 7 million acres of vernal pool landscapes originally occurred in California's Central Valley. Agriculture and urban development have eliminated nearly 90 percent of this habitat (Holland 2005) and the best remaining pools are now found on higher, older terraces (Holland and Jain 1988), especially along the east side of the Central Valley at the base of the Sierra foothills. Over 200 species of plants (Holland 1976) occur in vernal pools in California. Over half of these plants are found only in California (Holland 1976) and 98 are listed in California Native Plant Society's Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants (CNPS 2012). Central Valley vernal pools include a total of 6 animals and 11 plants that are Federally or State-listed as threatened or endangered.



Cattle and geese grazing near vernal pool (FWS)



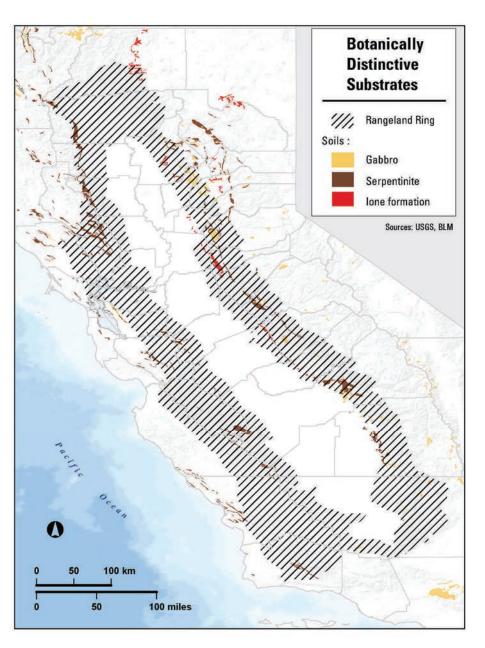
## **Botanically Distinctive Substrates**

Rangeland Habitat Association				
Grassland	Oak	Riparian/	Chaparral/	
	Woodland	Wetland	Scrub	

In the Sierra Nevada foothills in California, **gabbro soils** are found within discontinuous rock outcrops from Plumas to Tuolumne Counties. Gabbro soils are derived from mafic rocks (Hunter and Horenstein 1991), and have mineral, nutrient (high in magnesium and iron), and soil-water characteristics that make them unique. Five federally listed plant species and one species identified as a federal species of concern grow on low-nutrient gabbro soils.

Along the west coast of North America, **serpentine soils** are found within discontinuous rock outcrops in the Sierra Nevada and in the Coast Ranges from Santa Barbara County, California to British Columbia. Serpentine soils are formed from weathered ultramafic rocks (rocks which are extremely basic, very low in silica, and rich in ferromagnesian minerals) (Kruckeberg 1984a). Serpentine soils are inhabited by a diverse array of plant species. Serpentine endemic plants make up 10 percent of the flora within the State of California (Kruckeberg 1984a), even though serpentine soils only cover one percent of the state. Fifteen percent of all plant species listed as threatened or endangered in California show some degree of association with serpentine substrates (Safford *et al* 2005). Serpentine environments also support a number of endemic or nearly endemic invertebrates.

The **Ione** chaparral community is dominated by Ione manzanita, (*Arctostaphylos myrtifolia*) a low growing, evergreen native California shrub that is only found in small, disjunct populations in Amador and Calaveras counties. Its restricted range is largely attributed to specific environmental traits, the most obvious being the Ione Formation, a relict geologic formation. Ione manzanita is listed as threatened under the Federal Endangered Species Act. The associated Ione buckwheat (*Eriogonum apricum*) is listed as endangered both federally and within the State of California.



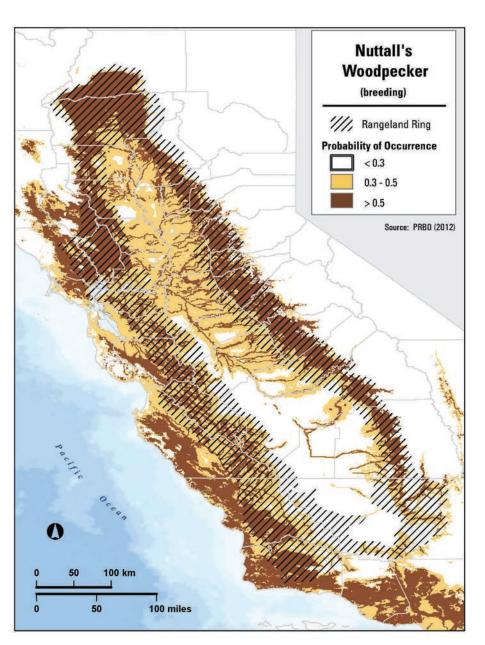
## **Nuttall's Woodpecker**

Rangeland Habitat Association				
Grassland	Oak	Riparian/	Chaparral/	
	Woodland	Wetland	Scrub	

The Nuttall's woodpecker (*Picoides nuttallii*) is endemic to California and northern Baja California, Mexico. This small woodpecker inhabits oak woodlands, riparian zones, and chaparral throughout the Rangeland Ring. It requires snags and dead limbs for nest excavation. Though Breeding Bird Survey data for California show a relatively stable population, Nuttall's woodpecker remains a species of concern due to it's limited distribution and overall low density. Habitat loss from development is the greatest threat to the species. It is currently categorized by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a Bird of Management Concern. Partners in Flight considers it a species needing management attention and a species of regional concern.



Nuttall's woodpecker (Mike Baird)



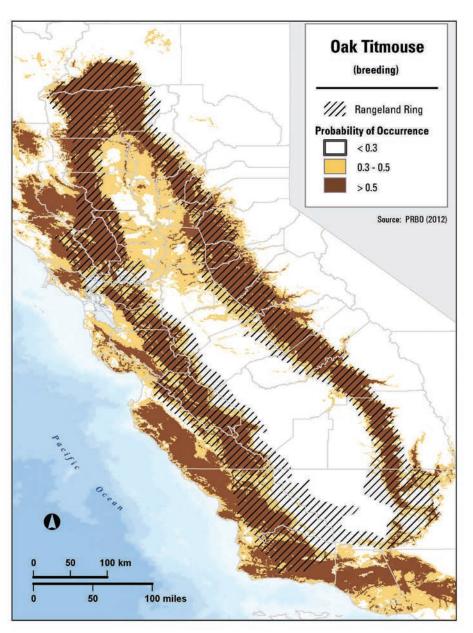
#### **Oak Titmouse**

Rangeland Habitat Association				
Grassland	Oak	Riparian/	Chaparral/	
	Woodland	Wetland	Scrub	

The oak titmouse (*Baeolophus inornatus*) is endemic to California and Baja California, Mexico. This small songbird occurs in oak and oak-pine woodlands where it usually prefers areas of moderate canopy cover. The oak titmouse nests in natural cavities or holes previously excavated by woodpeckers. Breeding Bird Surveys indicate a significant decline in California since 1966. The oak titmouse is categorized by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a Bird of Conservation Concern and a Bird of Management Concern. Partners in Flight considers it a species needing management attention, a species of regional concern, and a species of US -Canada Concern.



Oak titmouse (Alan Vernon)



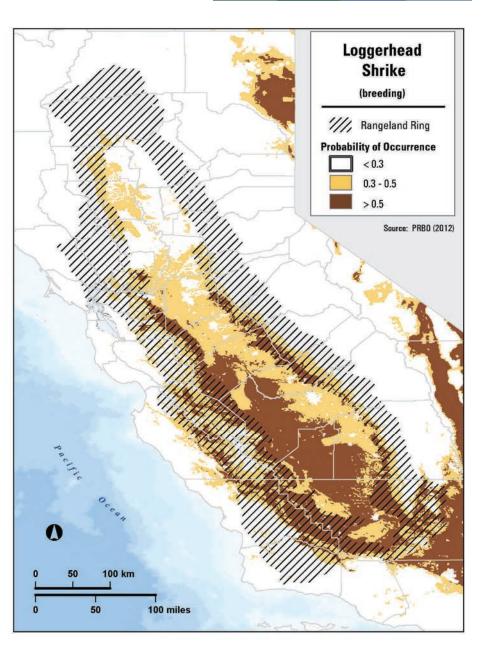
## **Loggerhead Shrike**

Rangeland Habitat Association				
Grassland	Oak	Riparian/	Chaparral/	
	Woodland	Wetland	Scrub	

Loggerhead shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*) can be found in lowlands and foothills throughout California, especially open habitats with scattered perches. It occurs in grasslands, open-canopied valley foothill hardwood, valley foothill hardwood-conifer, valley foothill riparian, pinyon-juniper, juniper, desert riparian, and Joshua tree habitats (Granholm 1990). Breeding Bird Survey data indicate a significant decline in California since 1966 and the loggerhead shrikes are close to extirpation in coastal southern California. Habitat loss on breeding and wintering grounds is probably a major threat to this species (Shuford and Gardali 2008). The loggerhead shrike is categorized by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a Bird of Conservation Concern and a Bird of Management Concern. It is state-listed as a Bird Species of Special Concern and Partners in Flight considers it a species needing management attention, a species of regional concern, and a species of US-Canada Concern.



Loggerhead shrike (Dick Daniels)



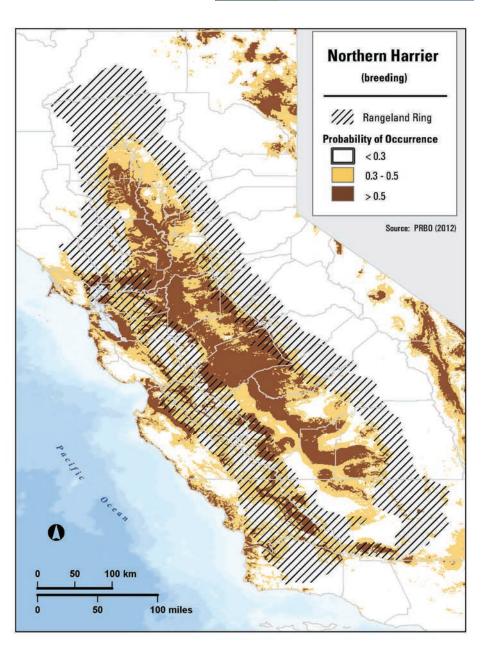
### **Northern Harrier**

Rang	geland Hab	itat Associ	ation
Grassland	Oak Woodland	Riparian/ Wetland	Chaparral/ Scrub

Northern harriers (*Circus cyaneus*) breed and forage in a variety of treeless habitats in California including freshwater marshes; brackish and saltwater marshes; wet meadows; weedy borders of water bodies; annual and perennial grasslands; some croplands; sagebrush flats; and desert sinks (Shuford and Gardali 2008). Breeding Bird Survey data have shown at least a moderate decline for northern harriers since 1944. Primary threats to harriers are loss and degradation of nesting and foraging habitat, nest failure form human disturbance, predator control projects, agricultural practices, and unnatural predation pressure (Shuford and Gardali 2008). The Northern harrier is a California Bird Species of Special Concern.



Northern harrier (Linda Tanner)

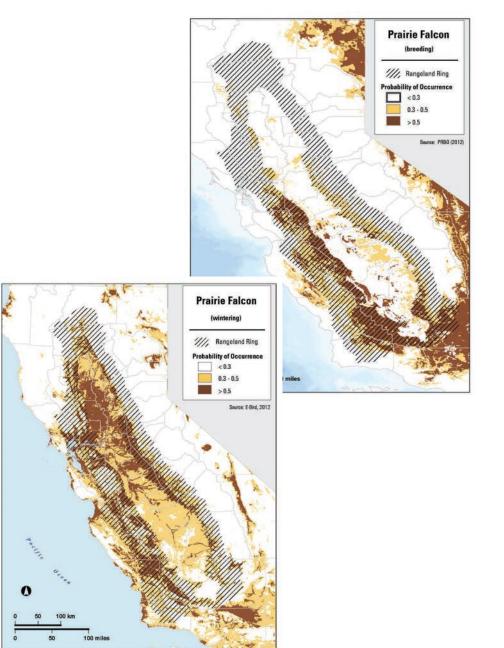


#### **Prairie Falcon**

Suitable habitat for the prairie falcon (*Falco mexicanus*) includes dry grassland and desert habitats, as well as grass, forb and open shrub stages of pinyon-juniper and ponderosa pine habitats (Polite and Pratt 1990). Since 2001, California has reported nearly 30 percent of all prairie falcons tallied nationwide in the annual Christmas Bird Count (National Audubon Society 2010). Prairie falcon populations have declined in recent decades, due to habitat destruction, poisoning of ground squirrels, and conversion of grassland to agriculture (Polite and Pratt 1990). The prairie falcon is categorized by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a Bird of Management Concern. Partners in Flight considers it a species needing management attention and a species of regional concern.

Prairie falcon (USFWS)

# Rangeland Habitat Association Grassland Oak Riparian/ Chaparral/ Scrub



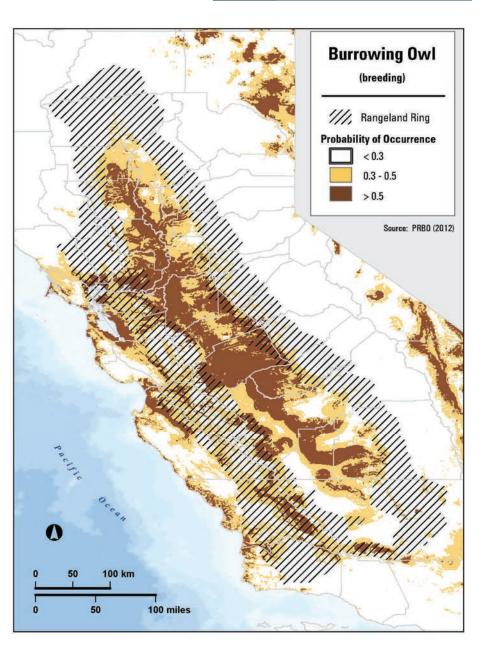
## **Burrowing Owl**

Rang	geland Hab	itat Associ	ation
Grassland	Oak Woodland	Riparian/ Wetland	Chaparral/ Scrub

The burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*) breeds in open treeless areas within grassland, steppe, and desert biomes, typically in gently-sloping areas with low, sparse vegetation. Burrowing owls also use agricultural fields. Spring and Fall migration habitat is thought to be similar to breeding habitat. Winter habitat also consists of low, sparse vegetation (Poulin, et. al 2011). In regions undergoing rapid urbanization along the central and southern coast, declines and local extirpations have occurred. Burrowing owl populations have declined in many counties. The biggest threat to burrowing owls is the conversion of farmland in the Central and Imperial Valleys tp urban use. Most burrowing owls occur on private lands (Shuford and Gardali 2008). The burrowing owl is categorized by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a Bird of Conservation Concern and a Bird of Management concern. It is state-listed as a Bird Species of Special Concern.



Burrowing owl (USFWS)



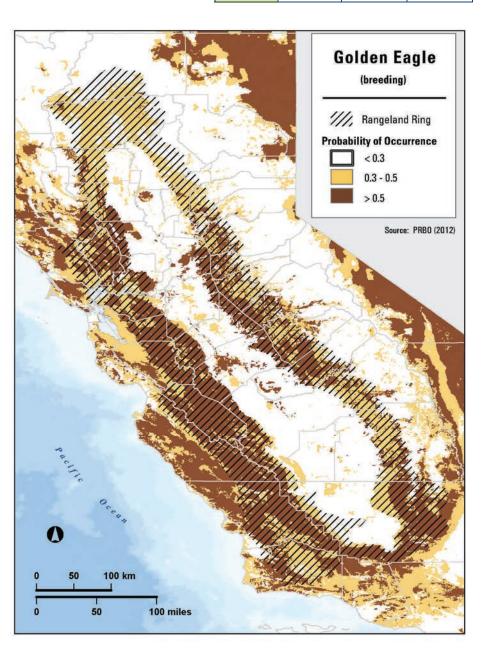
## **Golden Eagle**

Rangeland Habitat Association				ation
	Grassland	Oak Woodland	Riparian/ Wetland	Chaparral/ Scrub

Habitat for the golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) includes grasslands, mountain areas, foothills, deserts, and sage-juniper flats. Secluded cliffs with overhanging ledges and large trees are used for nesting and cover. Nest trees include several species of oak, foothill pine, California bay laurel, and western sycamore (Hunt et al 1998). Preferred territory sites include those that have a favorable nest site, dependable food supply, and broad expanses of open country for foraging. It resides in the center of the Central Valley (Polite and Pratt 1990). Golden eagles are sensitive to human presence and do not nest near urban areas. Disturbance near roosting and foraging habitat can lead to reproductive failure or even mortality (USFWS 2011). The golden eagle is protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. Threat include loss of foraging habitat, loss of nesting habitat, pesticide poisoning, lead poisoning, and collision with man-made structures such as wind turbines.



Golden eagle (Michael Lanzone)



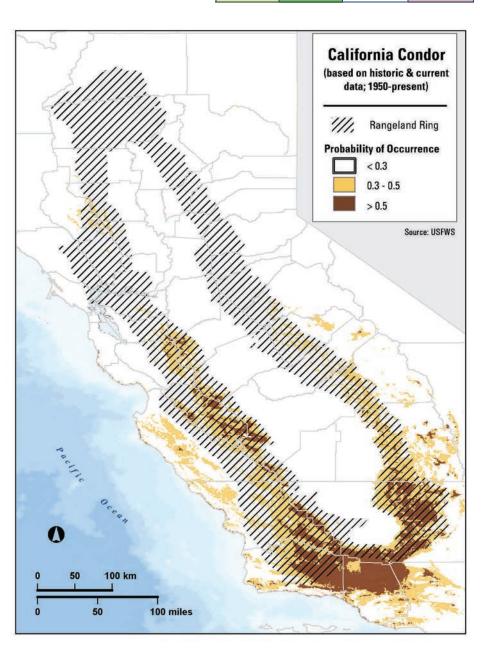
#### **California Condor**

Rangeland Habitat Association				
	Grassland	Oak Woodland	Riparian/ Wetland	Chaparral/ Scrub

The Federally-listed endangered California condor (Gymnogyps californianus) is the largest land bird in North America and one of the largest flying birds in the world. Adult condors weigh approximately 22 pounds and have a wingspan up to 9.6 feet (Snyder and Schmitt, 2002). Although condors once ranged across much of the United States, by 1982, the range was limited to a small area surrounding the southern San Joaquin Valley. Through captive breeding efforts, California Condor populations have since been reestablished at five release sites in the western United States (southern California—Hopper Mountain National Wildlife Refuge Complex; northern Arizona—Vermilion Cliffs; central California—Big Sur and Pinnacles National Monument) and in Baja California, Mexico—Sierra San Pedro de Mártir National Park. California condors nest in various types of rock formations, including crevices, overhung ledges, and potholes, and, more rarely, in cavities in giant sequoia trees (Snyder et al. 1986). California condors are obligate scavengers, and primarily forage in open terrain of foothill grassland and oak savannah habitats and occasionally in open scrub habitat. Many important foraging areas are on private rangelands in the foothills surrounding the Southern San Joaquin Valley.



California condor (USFWS)



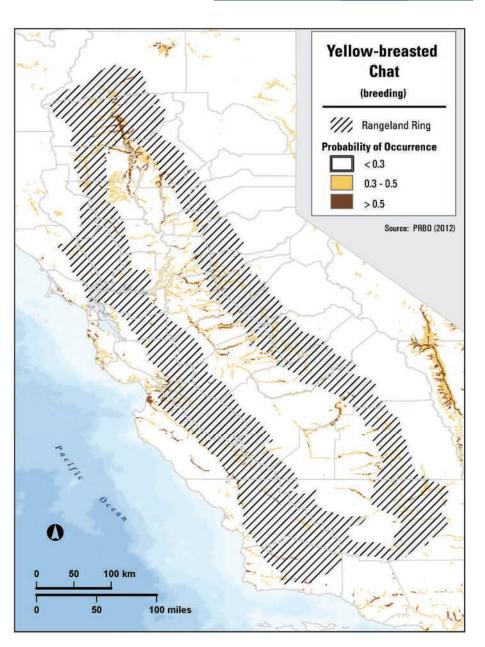
#### **Yellow-breasted Chat**

Rang	geland Hab	itat Associ	ation
Grassland	Oak	Riparian/	Chaparral/
	Woodland	Wetland	Scrub

The yellow-breasted chat (*Icteria virens*) resides in California from March to September, breeding from April through August (Shuford and Gardali 2008). It resides in low, dense vegetation (Eckerle and Thompson 2001) Numbers have declined in recent decades (Green 1990). The species no longer breeds in much of the Central Valley, with a breeding range reduced 35% from its historic extent. Destruction of riparian woodland through urbanization, agriculture, and flood control, as well as additional pressures, such as nest parasitism by the Brown-headed Cowbird, have led to declines (Shuford and Gardali 2008). One study found that a disturbance event caused a decline in population for subsequent years (Partners in Flight 2004). The yellow-breasted chat is state-listed as a Bird Species of Special Concern. Partners in Flight considers it a species needing management attention.



yellow-breasted chat (Bill Bouton)



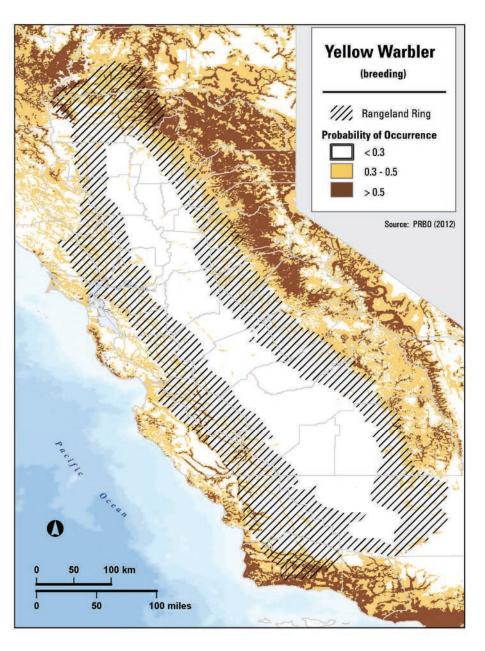
#### **Yellow Warbler**

Rangeland Habitat Association			
Grassland	Oak Woodland	Riparian/ Wetland	Chaparral/ Scrub

The yellow warbler (*Setophaga petechia* ) breeds throughout California, typically residing in riparian vegetation close to streams and in wet meadows. The use willows and cottonwoods, as well as other species of riparian shrubs or trees (Shuford and Gardali 2008). During breeding season, the species resides in riparian woodlands, ponderosa pine, montane chaparral, and mixed conifer habitats (Green 1990). Human population growth resulting in habitat degradation threatens yellow warblers, which are sensitive to habitat decrease. Predation and Brown-headed Cowbird parasitism has also caused declines. The yellow warbler is close to extirpation in the Central Valley (Shuford and Gardali 2008). Breeding pair numbers have also decreased rapidly in lowland areas (Green 1990). The yellow warbler is categorized by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a Bird of Conservation Concern and a Bird of Management Concern. It is state-listed as a Bird Species of Special Concern.



Yellow warbler (MDF)



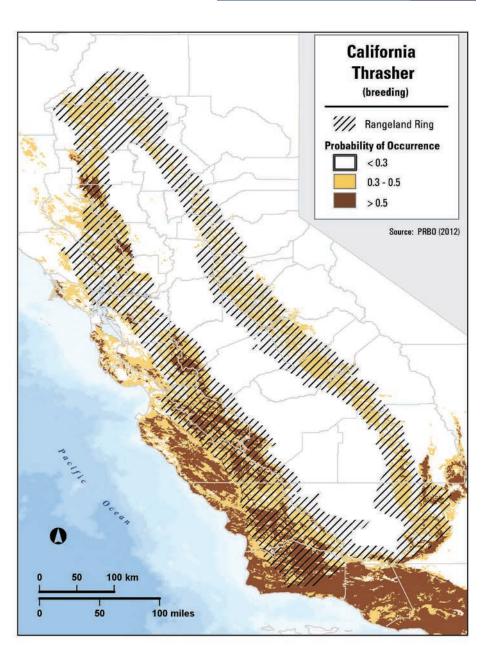
#### California Thrasher

Rangeland Habitat Association			
Grassland	Oak Woodland	Riparian/ Wetland	Chaparral/ Scrub

The California thrasher (*Toxostoma redivivum*) is endemic to coastal and foothill areas of California (Cody 2012). It also resides in moderate to dense chaparral habitats, valley foothill riparian habitat, and montane chaparral (Dobkin and Granholm 1990). The foothills of the Sierra are a significant portion of the California thrasher range (Siegel and DeSante 1999). Habitat destruction in the foothills threatens the California thrasher. Drought causing a decrease in foothill berry crops is an additional concern (Siegel and DeSante 1999). Partners in Flight considers the California Thrasher a species needing management attention, a species of regional concern, a species of US-Canada Concern, and a focal species for their Oak Woodland Bird Conservation Plan (PIF 2002).



California thrasher (Mike Baird)



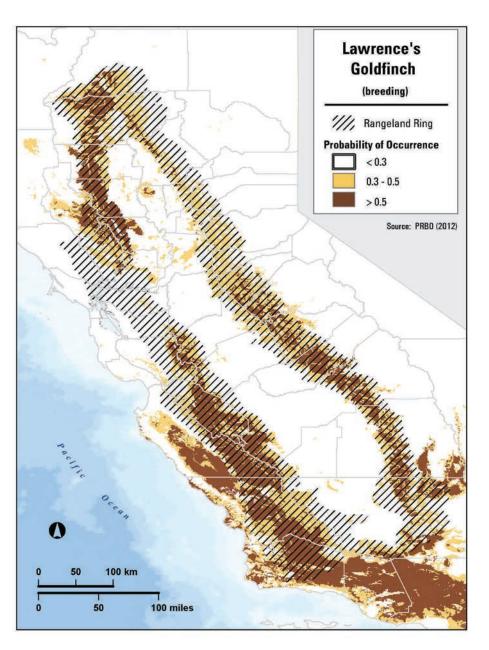
## Lawrence's Goldfinch

Rangeland Habitat Association			
Grassland	Oak	Riparian/	Chaparral/
	Woodland	Wetland	Scrub

Lawrence's goldfinch (*Spinus lawrencei*) is endemic to arid woodlands in the foothills of California and northern Baja California for breeding (Davis 1999). It breeds near water in woodland or chapparal (Granholm 1990). In the Sierra, low-elevation chaparral is critical for Lawrence's goldfinch. Development and cowbird parasitism threaten the species (Siegel and DeSante 1999). Lawrence's Goldfinch is categorized by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a Bird of Conservation Concern and a Bird of Management Concern. Partners in Flight considers it a planning and responsibility species and a species of US-Canada Concern.



Lawrence's goldfinch (Bill Bouton)



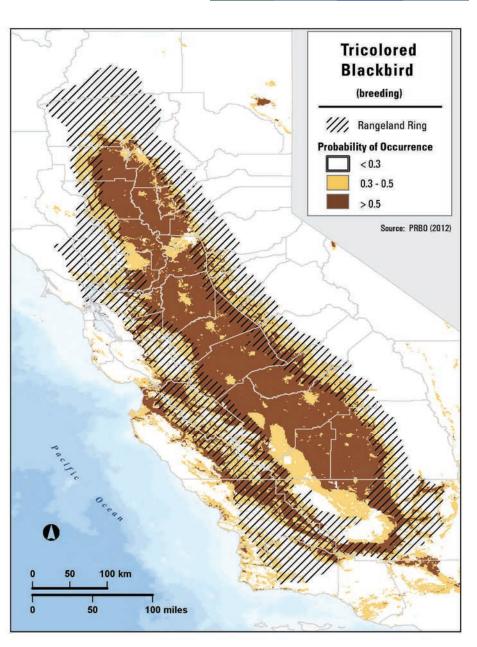
#### **Tricolored Blackbird**

Rangeland Habitat Association			
Grassland	Oak Woodland	Riparian/ Wetland	Chaparral/ Scrub

Ninety-nine percent of tricolored blackbirds (*Agelaius tricolor*) reside in California, specifically the Central Valley and surrounding foothills (Beedy and Hamilton 1999). The tricolored blackbird breeds near freshwater, preferring emergent wetland. It feeds in grassland and cropland (Granholm 1990). Degradation of habitat from urbanization and agriculture threatens the species. The number of breeders has declined dramatically in the Central Valley (Shuford and Gardali 2008). The tricolored blackbird is categorized by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a Bird of Conservation Concern and a Bird of Management Concern. Partners in Flight considers it a species in need of management attention and a species of regional concern.



Tricolor blackbird (Alan Vernon)



## San Joaquin Kit Fox

Rang	Rangeland Habitat Association			
Grassland	Oak	Riparian/	Chaparral/	
	Woodland	Wetland	Scrub	

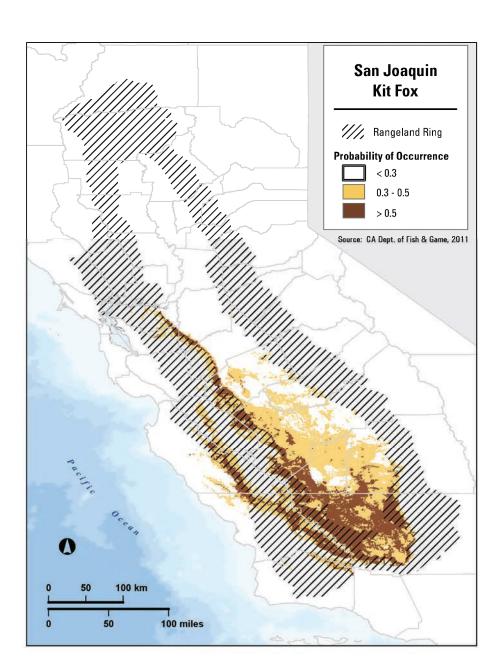
The San Joaquin kit fox (*Vulpes macrotis mutica*) is the larger of two subspecies of the kit fox, *Vulpes macrotis*, the smallest canid species in North America. The San Joaquin kit fox, on average, weighs 5 pounds, and stands 12 inches tall. The San Joaquin Kit Fox is federally-listed as endangered.

Kit fox are an arid-land-adapted species and typically occur in desert-like habitats in North America (Cypher 2006). Such areas have been characterized by sparse or absent shrub cover, sparse ground cover, and short vegetative structure (Cypher 2006). The subspecies historically ranged in alkali scrub/shrub and arid grasslands throughout the level terrain of the San Joaquin Valley floor from southern Kern County north to Tracy in San Joaquin County, and up into more gradual slopes of the surrounding foothills and adjoining valleys of the interior Coast Range.

Agricultural development of kit fox habitat remains the largest threat to the kit fox. The kit fox is also threatened by competitive exclusion from other canids, pesticide exposure, habitat fragmentation, loss of prey and off road vehicle use (USFWS 2010). The Ciervo-Panoche area, which includes the valley floor and foothills of parts of Fresno, San Benito and Merced counties is considered one of three core population areas (USFWS 2010).



San Joaquin kit fox (USFWS)



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